

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF ALNICK.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.


Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the report for the year 1939. By instruction from the Ministry, for the report, is to make it as short as is consistent with a general view of the sanitary condition of the district. As directed I place on the first page the names of the staff of the Authority.

1. Richard Rothwell, Clerk to the Alnwick Rural District Council.
2. Scott Purves M.D., F.B., C.M.Ed., Medical Officer of Health.
3. Oswald Mozart Farrell, Cert. S.I.S., & S.I.A., Chief Sanitary Inspector and Building and Sanitary Surveyor

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS.

The year 1939 may I think be taken as quite up to average, with no excessive conditions and a rainfall below average.

RAINFALL FOR 1939.

January	...	...	...	5.86
February	...	...	...	1.02
March	...	...	...	3.23
April	...	...	...	1.42
May	...	...	...	.60
June	...	...	...	1.61
July	...	...	...	2.56
August	...	...	...	1.38
September	...	...	...	1.47
October	...	...	...	4.86
November	...	...	...	1.96
December	...	...	...	1.43

27.40 inches.

For the above I am indebted to Mr. James Hay of Alnwick Castle Gardens.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

The area of the Alnwick Rural District is 93,000 acres 145.3 square miles.

The population as estimated by the Registrar General, is 12470.

The Number of inhabited houses is 3,831.

The Rateable Value is £50,398.

The sum represented by a penny rate is £217.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The population of the district as estimated by the Registrar General is 12,470, an increase of 330 in his estimate for the year 1938.

The number of deaths in the district for 1939 was 141 after the usual additions and subtractions 79 male and 62 female. The number of births was 183 and of these 100 were males 83 females. Of the males 97 were legitimate 3 illegitimate, of the females 79 were legitimate and 4 illegitimate. The births and birth-rate, the death and death rate are shown in the following table, with the corresponding figures for the previous year for comparison.

	Births.	Birth Rate per 1000 per annum.	Deaths.	Death Rate per 1000 per annum.
1938.	152.	12.52	167	13.75
1939.	183	14.67	141	11.37

The figures for 1939 are here shewn to be much more favourable than for 1938. The Birth Rate and Death Rate for England and Wales are 15.0 and 12.1 respectively.

The following table shows the ages at which the deaths occurred and for comparison the figures for the previous year are also given.

	Under one year.	1 and under 2 yrs.	2 and under 5 yrs.	5 and under 15 yrs.	15 and under 25 yrs.	25 and under 35 yrs.	Total.
1938.	12	2	0	4	2	12	
1939.	6	0	1	3	4	8	
	35 and under 45 yrs.	45 and under 55 yrs.	55 and under 65 yrs.	55 and under 75 yrs.	75 and over		
1938.	5	10	25	43	51	167	
1939.	4	3	26	34	52	141	

This table must be regarded as very satisfactory from the last total and halved infantile deaths compared with the previous year.

INFANTILE DEATH RATE.

The number of deaths under one year for 1939 was 6, This gives an infantile death rate of 32.7 per thousand children born. The rate for England and Wales is 50.0. The cause of death were Congenital debility and premature birth 4, whooping cough one and megingitis one. Three were deaths of male children and three females.

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

I will first deal with the ordinary notifiable infectious diseases, excluding tuberculosis which will be taken later in the report. In the year 1939 there were notified, 34 cases of infectious disease against 41 during the year 1938. The following table shows the incidence of the cases as regards the sub-districts.

		Markworth.	Embleton.	Totals.
Scarlet Fever...	...	9	6	15
Diphtheria.	...	2.	7	9
Pneumonia.	...	4	0	4
Erysipelas.	...	4	0	4
Puerperal Fever.	...	2	1	3
Poliomyelitis...	...	0	1	1
		21	15	36

Scarlet Fever. This disease appeared in the form of sporadic cases and was never epidemic...

Diphtheria. The epidemic in connection with the West Bolton School which began in December 1938 continued into the beginning of 1939, and 5 more cases were reported. Two milk farms were involved, but owing to the precautions taken no case was traced to either place. The disease was in a mild form and there were no deaths.

Pneumonia and Erysipelas cases were all single in incidence.

Puerperal Fever. Three cases were notified in the district, but all were successfully treated and there were no deaths.

Poliomyelitis one case was reported. This occurred in the village of Eglingham, in which at that time a number of soldiers were quartered. The case was treated at home and was a comparatively mild attack, which yielded to treatment.

Enteric Fever. No cases were notified in the year 1939.

Ophthalmia Neonatorum. During the year 1939 no case was notified.

TUBERCULOUS DISEASE.

During the year 1939 there were notified in the district 11 cases of tuberculosis disease. Of these 9 were cases of pulmonary and 2 of non-pulmonary tuberculosis. There were 4 deaths all from pulmonary disease. As regards the sub-districts the distribution was as follows:-

	Notifications.		Deaths.	
	Non-Pulmonary.	Pulmonary.	Pulmonary.	Non-Pulmonary.
Markworth	6	2	1	0
Embleton	3	1	3	0
Totals.	9	2	4	0

The notification of tuberculous disease is satisfactorily carried out in the District.

NEW CASES OF TUBERCULOUS DISEASE AND
MORTALITY IN THE DISTRICT.

Age Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
25	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
35	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
55	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
65 and over.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals.	6	3	2	0	1	3	0	0

The total number of deaths from tuberculous disease for 1939 was 4. All the deaths were caused by pulmonary disease and one was a male and 3 females. In 1938 the number of deaths was 11.

The deaths from the varicous kinds of cancer was 28 for 1939, which is exactly the same as in 1938. This again illustrates the tendency of the death rate from tuberculosis to decrease and the rate from cancer to increase. This latter may be due to some extent to an increased exactness in diagnosis, which however, ought to be counter balanced by improved and earlier treatment, operations and otherwise.

SPECIAL CAUSES OF SICKNESS.

Beyond the epidemic of diphtheria in connection with the West Bolton School, referred to earlier in this report there has been one special incidence of disease in the district.

The general Sanitary Condition of the district is excellent. The new water supply and sewage works at Felton are nearly finished and will soon be in operation. This sewage scheme by removing the beam from the eye of the Council will enable them to deal faithfully with the note in the eye of those who contaminate the watercourse of the district.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE DISTRICT.

There is in the Alnwick Rural District very little unemployment. The supply of farm labour is short, the more so owing to ploughing out regulations. Coal mining is working at high pressure. Quarrying is also reasonably prosperous. Although owing to the fact that the sanitary and the employment districts do not coincide it is impossible to give exact figures yet it may be taken that there is employment for all who are willing to work.

NURSING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE DISTRICT.

The arrangements for nursing in the district conducted by the County Nursing Association, both as regards district and special nurses, are in every way satisfactory.

HOSPITALS AVAILABLE FOR THE DISTRICT.

There is no general hospital in the district, but it is well served by the Alnwick Infirmary and the Alnwick Union Hospital within the district and the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-on-Tyne without the district.

ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

The Alnwick Rural District is still dependent on the hospitality of the Urban district for the isolation of infectious cases, at their small hospital. Under present circumstances it does not appear likely that this age old problem is to be immediately settled.

JOINT SMALLPOX HOSPITAL.

This hospital is the only one really in the Alnwick Rural District. As for some years there have been no cases of Smallpox in the district or indeed in the County, it was considered by the Regional Medical Officer that the accommodation would be more suitably met for the isolation of cases of contagious diseases affecting the children evacuated into the district. The cases admitted have been those suffering from

from scabies, impetigo and ringworm. The treatment of scabies in bulk proved to be a problem the difficulties of which even after more than half a century of practice I had not realized. The difficulty is that an attack affords no immunity, and the children reinfect each other, as they cannot be kept entirely separate.

There is no Tuberculosis hospital in the district, but treatment of this disease is provided by the County Council at Wooley Sanatorium.

There is no Maternity Hospital in the district, but the Alnwick Infirmary admits cases requiring Caesarian Section, as an exception to their rules. A good many cases where trouble is expected or where home conditions are unsuitable are sent to the Princess Mary Maternity Hospital in Newcastle. The County Council provides an excellent consultant service for difficult obstetric cases.

There is no Orthopaedic Hospital in the district, but an orthopaedic clinic is carried on in the town of Alnwick.

There is no Special Children's Hospital in the district, but the needs of the district are served by the General hospitals, the Babies Hospital and the Fleming Memorial Hospital in Newcastle and by the Cripples' Home at Gosforth and the Poor Children's Home at Stannington.

PUBLIC HEALTH (PREVENTION OF TUBERCULOSIS REGULATIONS, 1925).

During the year 1939, I have not been called by the County Council Veterinary Inspector to inspect any carcases.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES.

The Alnwick Rural District Council have an excellent Ambulance stationed at Alnwick. Several other ambulances serve the district, for instance, those at Whittle Colliery and Broomhill. This to be supplemented I understand by four A.R.P ambulances and several owners of private cars have promised extra help when required.

We have no ambulance for the transport of infectious cases, except a trailer van kept at the Smallpox hospital.

LABORATORY WORK.

The facilities afforded by the County Council for the examination of pathological specimens are good and prompt, and are fully taken advantage of by the medical practitioners.

Finally, I have to thank the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of the Sanitary Committee and the members of the Council for their consideration and support and the Clerk and the Inspectors for their co-operation and help.

SCOTT PURVES, M.D., M.B., C.M.Ed.,

Medical Officer of Health.